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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 007848

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/04/2007

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: GOT REITERATES CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE PAROLE OF
MURDERER OF TURKISH DIPLOMAT

REF: ANKARA 7589 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch; reasons 1.5 b and d.

11. (C) Ahmet Banguoglu, MFA Director General for Bilateral Political Affairs (Americas), told DCM November 4 the GOT remains highly concerned about the possible parole of Harry Sassounian, convicted in 1984 of the 1982 assassination of Turkish CG Kemal Arikan in Westwood (L.A.). Banguoglu said he understands Sassounian has been offered parole though some kind of "secretive deal," which the GOT considers "totally unacceptable." He said parole would contradict, and could undermine, U.S. efforts against terrorism, and would be seen very negatively by the Turkish public. DCM said there had been no "deal" to parole Sassounian; a judge had ruled that he could be considered for parole in 2007.

12. (C) Banguoglu said the Turkish Embassy in Washington had reported that both the U.S. Federal Attorney General's office and the Los Angeles Attorney General's office might convey their opposition to parole for Sassounian. The GOT would greatly appreciate a strongly worded argument against parole, and is prepared to submit its own opinion to the parole board. The USG and GOT should work together to block a parole decision. DCM said the U.S., like Turkey, has an independent judiciary, and therefore the federal government has limited influence in these types of cases. However, the U.S. administration shares the GOT's view that sentences for terrorist actions should be severe and will work as aggressively as possible within legal limits to see that unwarranted parole is not granted in this case.

13. (C) Action Request: Post highly appreciates Department's rapid response to our initial request for clarification (Reftel). In light of continuing high-level GOT concern, please advise further on Sassounian's status and the nature of the ruling on his eligibility for parole. Please advise also on the legitimacy of a filing opposing eventual parole so we may share the status of possible USG actions in this case.

PEARSON